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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● DECEMBER 1985

"... When the Sepherds had seen the child they made known to others..." (Luke 2:17)



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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India
DECEMBER 1985

EDITOR

THE REV. DASS BABU

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HON. BUSINESS MANAGER

THE REV. M. AZARIAH, General Secretary

Synod Secretariat

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25 Years Ago!

THE DIVIE BABE!

What is the usual topic of our conversation outside Church? The Kingdom of Heaven? What was the usual topic of conversation of the devout Jews of old Lord's time? It was the coming of the Messiah. They would wistfully ask: When and how would the Messiah come? Would he indeed put down injustice and establish justice, abash sin and replace it with holiness, stamp out wickedness and cause righteousness to flourish, take away sorrow and give joy, instead of destroy war and usher in peace? It was such questions as these which agitated the minds of devout Hebrews like the aged Simeon who 'waited for the consolation of Israel' and who had been divinely assured that he 'should not taste death before he had seen the Lord's Christ'. And upheld by the promise, he lived an easy life, until one day, both he and the Blessed Virgin Mary, independently led by the Holy Spirit, made their way into the Temple where the Holy Mother, without a word, placed the Divie Babe in the outreach arms of the aged Saint.

BISHOP D. CHELLAPPA
— Churchman, 1950

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The Prince of Peace



The rarest commodity in the world, the world as it is today, the commodity that is more expensive than the most expensive jewels is peace. Unfortunately peace is so fragile, so much so that it is broken every moment, everywhere. And we cry for Peace. Somewhere on our planet peace is broken everyday by individuals, by groups and by nations. The war scene in the Middle East, in South Africa, in Afghanistan, the ethnic violence in Sri Lanka along the borders of countries elsewhere are not the only instances where Peace is broken. Countless people break Peace for countless reasons every day. The World is torn by war. We have become war-weary and war-torn. As if our cup of misery is not full, natural catastrophes such as the recent volcanic eruption in British Columbia which has wiped out an entire city, the colossal death toll due to the gas leakage in Bhopal, the cyclonic effect on Tamil Nadu where several people have lost their lives and thousands of people rendered homeless, strike our dear earth with cruel vengeance.

It is clear that peace summits, peace corps, peace conferences have failed. It is always back to the square one, after the business is over. We hear fresh slogan and the sloganeering will continue until another summit comes off. The current slogan, 'Stop Star Wars' rings round the world. The true reason for this state of affairs is that man seems to be irretrievably committed to win the death race. The frenzy

is such that even the land of the 'Prince of Peace' is not spared.

The words, spoken by the angel announcing the birth of Jesus are worth recalling—'Peace on earth goodwill to all men.' The angel knew what he was talking about for at that time the Holy Land was under the Roman yoke. But the political yoke was much lighter than the religious yoke which was choking the nation. The Peace-maker was rejected—no place to lay his head. His proposals were laughed at.

But he has not given up. The only true Peace-maker knocks at our doors even now. 1986 has been declared the Year of Peace—a welcome sign. How best can we utilise this opportunity? It should not become a ritualistic affair.

Let us pause for a moment. One week before the New Year we'll be celebrating Christmas. It is important to realise that the event marks God's greatest gift to mankind—the gift of the Prince of Peace. In this world a healthy 'new-borne babe' is the only perfect picture of peace. No artist, no matter how great, has ever succeeded in creating a better picture of peace. Truly the babe in the manger is mystery, tremendum and fascinarum! If 1986 is the year of peace let the coming Christmas be the Christmas of peace which, once again, given by God by sending His dear Son Jesus Christ to be with us.

—DASS BABU

GOD'S GIFTS

God's perfect gift to us at Christmas was Jesus. He gave Jesus to us as helpless baby, needing parents to love and tend him. But Jesus was lovingly and perfectly formed as a human baby. Joseph and Mary had been chosen to protect and care for him. All details were taken care of. This was a perfect gift. In our own way let us share with each other God's varied gifts of experience, of wisdom, of knowledge, and our resources, following God's example at Christmas.

Wishing you a merry Christmas.

— JESUDASON
Moderator

*We Wish you All
A very Happy Christmas*



The Gods of our Fathers—Towards A Theology of Indian Religious and Cultural Heritage

RT. REV. DR. P. VICTOR PREMASAGAR, Medak

Dr. Donald McGaven's article, 'A Giant step in Christian Mission*', is a passionate appeal to the conscience of Christians, churches and missionary societies in America to engage in a massive evangelistic effort on a global scale, in terms of the 'unreached peoples' throughout the world. While taking this giant step, Dr. McGaven considers the so-called younger churches as of no significance being minority communities without any power, mostly coming from tribesmen and oppressed and depressed classes, primarily engaged in nurturing and managing themselves.

Missiological presuppositions

There are certain presuppositions in this article that seem strange to us and to our peoples who are aimed at those for whom this burden is being borne by the American churches. The *ethnic* nations are referred to as the unreached. This is precisely the early Hebrew view of other nations as those who should be driven out, subjugated or proselytized in their later history. The paper misses the point that no nation is unreached, because God is at work and continues to work amongst all nations. The other nations are termed as 'lost men and women—locked out and locked away'. It may be asked as to where they are lost and from whom they are locked out? The idea that one nation is blessed by God so that they may be a blessing to others, subordinates the other nations to the one whom God is believed to have arbitrarily chosen. The choice is not to be understood as exclusive but inclusive. The *Niphal* form of *brk* (to bless) in Gen. 12: 3 could be translated as 'caim their blessing'. The nations are not passive recipients but active participants in the blessings that God has offered to all peoples of the earth. It is not that in and through the blessed one the other nations are blessed but that the other nations claim and participate in the blessings God offers to all peoples of the earth. This Creator responsibility of God towards all nations is proclaimed by the prophets.

Are you not to me as the children of Ethiopians
unto me O children of Israel? saith the Lord;
Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?
and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians
from Kir? (Amos 9: 7)

The paper does not reckon with the blessings which God has offered to other nations as well but which have often been undermined by unjust social, economic and political systems internationally perpetuated by powerful nations.

* *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Vol. I.
No. 3. 1984 pp. 251-256.

In such missiological circles as this paper represents, there is a total lack of appreciation of the faiths and cultures of other nations. Cultures of other nations are taken into account only for evolving evangelistic strategies and not as witness to God's revelation activity amongst other nations. The oppressive and exploitative structures within other nations are due to human fall which are equally present in the so-called Christian nations and societies as well. The slave trade by the western nations dehumanizing and displacing the African peoples is as ghastly and inhuman as expressed in caste system in India. These are expressions of the fallen nature of man in spite of the fact that God has been revealing himself to all peoples of the world. Therefore naming the peoples of the non-western cultures and faiths as lost and locked out, is a narrow vantage point from which the nations and cultures that have power to oppress and exploit to the extent that they could amass millions of dollars even from loose change into such magnitude and power and can indeed take a giant step striding across the whole world trampling upon the cultures and heritages of other nations of the world.

The first steps : Messianic and unitary faith

The first steps that the disciples and the apostles took was not from wealth and power but from weakness and utter dependence on the people to whom they were missioned—sent. The words of our Lord while sending the twelve and the seventy are a call to complete dependence for their sustenance on those to whom they were sent—not to take anything and yet go with the power to heal and proclaim the good news of the kingdom. There is a call to respect the habits and customs of peoples. The disciples are asked to eat whatever is set before them in a house. This kind of utter dependence on the peoples to whom they go with the Gospel is not reflected in his paper. And yet the Gospel went to the ends of the earth in the first century, not from affluence but from a state of utter dependence upon peoples to whom they went with the Gospel.

Jesus indeed asked his disciples to go first to the lost of the house of Israel—Jerusalem, Judea and then Samaria and the ends of the earth. While the conscience of the western Christians is kindled for the lost sheep—the other nations, there is nothing being suggested to be done amongst the peoples of the western nations in order to recover and renew their faith whose young people are disillusioned to such an extent that they go after every *guru* that sets himself up in the western countries and several of them move to the east in search of peace and faith. We see many of them completely disillusioned about the Christian faith of their fathers and come to us asking us to give up the Christian faith and inherit the glorious

religious and cultural heritage of India. The Indian churches are often faced with the task of helping such people to recover their Christian faith. No nation is Christian today and therefore evangelistic outreach should be in all nations, including those of the west. There are unreached peoples in the so-called Christian nations as well, whom the Christian church in those countries is finding it extremely difficult to reach.

M. M. Thomas draws attention to the aggressive nature of the messianic faiths over against the unitary faiths and cultures of the world. An aggressive messianic attitude is reflecting in the language and thoughtforms of this paper. The imperial colonial enterprises of the western nations have been justified either through messianic or election theologies. The churches in the third world while accepting Christ as Lord, have struggle with the issue of affirming the presence of Jesus in their cultural and religious heritage. The aggressive, exclusive messianic presentation of Christian faith and strategies for mission worked out in such a milieu, should be discarded by the churches with a definite option for a sensitive unitary understanding of God. This would affirm that no nation is shut out or locked out from the love and purposes of God. The Christians in Asia and Africa would like to ask the question as to what they would do with their cultural heritage and the gods of their fathers. These may seem naive to the western religious and secular culture but they have indeed nurtured, supported, comforted, strengthened and provided hope to their fathers. Is this not the hand of the same God who came down to see the peoples who laboured in Babel building a tower and liberated them through giving them different linguistic and cultural identities, who also came down to see the people of Israel oppressed in Egypt and set them free. The perception of God as creator, redeemer, sustainer, full of grace, truth, compassion and love, is surely through the revelation of God, who has thus disclosed himself to our people. When the Gospel was preached in the Indian village, they did accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, were baptized and worshipped him as the God who forgives and saves them from their sins. But at the time of the harvest they were still drawn to offer worship to the village goddess with her small temple on the tank bund, whom their ancestors had worshipped for centuries and who was benevolent to them and continues to be gracious to their children's children also. As for them they could worship different gods for different concerns and needs. By presenting Jesus without resolving his relations to the village gods, the early missionaries and preachers of the gospel created theological problems for people which were beyond their comprehension. They resolved these contradictions by accepting Jesus as one of their deities who could be worshipped along with their ancestral deities.

The experience of Israel—Theological struggle for an inclusive perspective

Israel were faced with their faith in Yahweh and their faith in tribal gods whom they worshipped as the gods of their fathers and came into contact with the gods of the Canaanites when they entered into Canaan. These different gods had different characteristics—the tribal gods—the gods of the fathers were nomadic gods who moved from place to place with no settled dwellings just as their devotees who had lived in tents. These were gods of promise who guided their peoples to inherit their promises. The nomads with their cattle, lived around water places and pasture lands in the desert. But when these were becoming scarce their gods would appear to them in a vision or a dream to the head of the tribe, and promise

water and pasture lands some miles away. When the people moved out to own these promises their deities also moved with them and guided them on their way to the place of promise.

The Canaanites were settled people and their gods also had temples for them. They were not obliged to move from place to place as their gods had the power to create and granted fertility blessings to them so that they could grow food in the place where they had settled. The blessings and fertility of land, cattle and human beings were considered as gifts from their gods.

When the tribes of Israel, at least some of them, came into Canaan they came with the belief in Yahweh of Sinai who had delivered them from their bondage in Egypt and gave them food from heaven in the desert, guiding and leading them through discipline in the desert into the land of Canaan—a land flowing with milk and honey. The Yahweh religion, perhaps originally of the Midianite peoples, was similar to the religion of the gods of the fathers, and it was easy to affirm then as Yahweh who had delivered them out of the bondage in Egypt. But they had problems with the Canaanite deities because of their debased, perverted fertility rites practised as cultic worship at their shrines. Israel, to begin with, warned themselves against these gods and the religious and cultural heritage of the Canaanites but were soon obliged to incorporate the theological concepts of these religions, their culture and their customs into their own religion of Yahweh. The common people worshipped Yahweh—but went after the Canaanite deities of the land as those who assured them fertility through their worship. The Israelite theologians and prophets affirm the characteristics of these deities to Yahweh their God. Some of the most benign characteristics attributed to Yahweh are those of the Canaanite Baal and other deities. The theological ideas about God as the creator of heaven and earth, the father of the orphan, the widow and the stranger, the giver of fertility to the land, cattle and the peoples, kingship and other theological concepts were all from the Canaanite religious heritage. Israel learned to affirm them by assimilating these ideas and thus provided a basis for unity amongst the peoples of the land. It is said that Israel also took over the casuistic laws from the laws of the Canaanite communities when they settled in Canaan.

The human sacrifices practised at the Canaanite temples was rejected through retelling an ancient legend in the story of Abraham and Isaac, where Yahweh although had asked Abraham to offer his son like the Canaanite deities, yet stops him from slaying his son and appreciates the faith of Abraham even without the need to shed the blood of his son. God provides a ram in place of the son, and thereby the Hebrew theologian roots out human sacrifice in Israel.

In all this, it is through a process of critical evaluation, assimilation and rejection wherever necessary, through retelling the ancient religious stories that the Hebrew theologians make for an all inclusive basis for the religion of his people. He has no fear of syncretism at all, but is vigilant to discard all that is deluding in terms of his own understanding of God. The Hebrew theologians perceived their God as the God of all peoples, all cultures and faiths, but at the same time critically evaluated and rejected or assimilated in terms of their own faith understanding of God. It is this type of responsible, sensitive assimilation and critical evaluation of religion where necessary that the cultural and religious heritage of our people should be affirmed as part of our faith in Jesus Christ.

The Indian Experience—the Gods of our fathers

An over emphasis on the historical character of the Christian biblical narratives and rejection of the stories of the Indian religious heritage as unhistorical, has deprived the Church of this facility to work upon the ancient legends, in the light of the Christian revelation in order to affirm and assimilate into the Christian faith, the ancient faith-insights and cultural heritage. The inhuman, perverse, oppressive exploitative cultural religious beliefs and practices could be seen as those that have been due to the fallen human nature. Such aberrations are also present in the Hebrew history and the history of the church as well.

An emphasis on Christology over against the trinitarians understanding of God, has led to a negative appraisal of the pre-Christian religious and cultural heritages of other nations. There has been a theological pre-occupation to look for Christ in the pre-Christian religious and cultural traditions. The Indian theological search for the unknown Christ in Hinduism, the unacknowledged and the unbound Christ of Hinduism, look for Christ in pre-Christian religions. It is God, the father in the trinitarian faith, that we should look for in religions prior to the coming of Jesus. It is a theological anachronism to judge the understanding of God, before Christ, with the revelation in Jesus Christ. The pre-Christian religions and their theological and cultural insights should be critically evaluated as those of the Old Testament. These religions should be seen as precursors to the revelation in Jesus Christ and not as totally unrelated. The discontinuity and the totally otherness of the revelation in Jesus Christ, should be reviewed with a view to discovering God the father's presence with different peoples of the world in their different contexts and historical situations. This is precisely the insight of the writer to the Hebrews, when he begins his epistle with the words

‘God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past, unto the fathers by the prophets Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His son . . . (Heb. 1 : 2)

The Gods of the fathers in the patriarchal narratives are similar to the gods of the fathers of the nations of the world. As the Yahwist saw the need for revising the Elohist's view of exclusive election of Israel and pre-occupying with the election theology as salvation history, with a creation theology, to link the religion of Israel with the religions and cultures of other nations of the world, a similar assessment of the gods of our fathers should be made in relation to God the father revealed in Jesus Christ. The Yahwist breaks the narrow exclusive election theology by adding a preface to the Hebrew story of election, with the creation and fall stories and thereby affirms the saving work of God for all peoples.

Such an inclusive theological perspective would make no nation on the earth without God's revelation in their own context. Indian Christian theology has preoccupied itself with a comparative appraisal of the Vedantic and other religious theologies of the written cultures such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the epics and other bhakti religious literature. The oral cultures of the peoples who were socially ostracised, economically oppressed, and exploited, have not so far been the topics of Indian Christian theology. Those who have accepted Christ from these silent cultures, have never found any excitement over the so-called Indian Christian theology. Even the dialogue with other faiths has been exclusively with the written religions and cultures, totally undermining the cultural heritage of the majority of Christians who come from the communities that have been excluded from the

elitist religions and cultural heritage. The religion and culture of the Gods of our fathers should also be included so that they will see the presence of God amongst their fathers in their oppression and exclusion. Thus every religious and cultural heritage of a nation, whether written or oral traditions become points of continuity between the gods of the fathers and the revelation in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ should encourage the Church to critically evaluate the religious and cultural heritage of all peoples with this inclusive theological perspective. The story of God with the nations of the world should suggest a continuity between their religious and cultural heritage and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, lack of such an inclusive affirmation of the religious heritage of the Gods of the fathers, has led to a total rejection of the cultural heritage of the new believers in Jesus Christ. In India conversion to faith in Christ meant a total rejection of the cultural heritage and of the faith of their fathers to the extent that people were drawn towards Christ but refused baptism as it symbolised a total break from the faith of their fathers and their culture roots. The rejection of baptism has led to a question whether baptism is needed at all in India. The rejection of baptism should be seen as the reaction against a theology which totally rejects the religion and culture of the gods of our fathers.

This theological perspective would lead to a critical appraisal and assimilations of the religious and cultural heritage of the nations of the world. Then it may be asked as to what we shall do with the Old Testament? The Old Testament becomes a paradigm to understand the way in which God acted with one people and would encourage other peoples to narrate their own stories about the presence of God amongst their fathers. This would bring the riches of the religious and cultural heritage of nations to the faith in the gods the fathers of our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the eternal word, who was lighting every man that has come into this world. The Johannine Gospel begins with such an inclusive understanding of God the creator and Jesus Christ, the Word, who pitched his tent amongst us. Although the Johannine Gospel appears to make for an exclusive understanding of Jesus, this has to be reviewed in the light of the preface to Gospel, in the same way as the exclusive election theology of Israel was enlarged through the prefacing of the salvation history with the Creation story.

It is much easier for the preachers of the Gospel to proclaim Jesus alone and present him as one who brings about a discontinuity with the religious and cultural heritage of nations. Lack of an inclusive perspective has led to a caricature of other religious and cultural heritages and thus alienated majority of the peoples of the nations. Even those who opted for this exclusive commitment with a discontinuity with their Gods of the fathers as a package deal, have often been drawn in their innermost longing to the religious and cultural heritage of their fathers.

Towards an Indian Christian Theology

Christian mission should engage in this comprehensive, inclusive appraisal of the heritage of the nations through a theology of the Gods of our fathers, and build a bridge between the gods of the nations and the faith in Jesus Christ. It is a call to a more sensitive, critical, inclusive approach to the religious and cultural heritage of the nations. Any step merely from economic strength void of this religious and cultural responsibility, would only frustrate the nations and the Good News is bound to be heard as bad news, alienating peoples of the nations from Jesus and his love which is the expression of God's continuing love for all his mankind in all nations and throughout the histories of the peoples of the world.

Vision for Relief Mission

THE RT. REV. DR. SUNDAR CLARKE, *Madras*

Situation of Crisis

The rains came and they came in torrents. They left us baffled, stranded, homeless, hungry and wet in the not too warm a month—'sombre November'. It was sheets of water and it was non-stop. It was torrents, buckets, nay, tubs of water poured out from the clouds. Nothing could stop it, nothing could prevent rain that most often is scarce but now it appeared cruelly torrential. It killed people, it killed thousands of cattle, it left homes flat on the ground. It was a spectre I saw and could hardly believe. It was an agonising experience for us all. To us it has been not only a situation of crisis but also to many of us it has inflicted deep wounds in our feelings and in our emotions.

I have been visiting many of these flood affected areas and will be doing so more during the coming weeks. To quote just one instance, in a village called Vallarpirai (Madurantakam Pastorate) about 45 families saved their lives by living for a day and night on a roof-top of two tiled houses. To them the loss was total—that is putting it mildly. They lost their feelings too—they looked blank and vacant. In another village called Pasumbur, many of the houses had no walls, had no roofs, everything was on ground level.

Everywhere we saw only sheets of water with islands of collapsed roofs. Loss of life and property was enormous in Madurantakam Taluk with thousands of families rendered homeless. The breach in the tank there—one of the largest in the State—caused all the damage, severely destroying the road and rail communications which are still to be restored. In the Pastorates of Tirupporur and Tirukkazhukunram located close to the coastal area many villages were washed out. In a village called Paiyanur all the 400 houses were destroyed. In the city of Madras about 1,50,000 hutment dwellings were reduced to the ground, with all the families seeking refuge in schools, churches and other public buildings. In the district of Chengleput over 1,00,000 acres of paddy fields were submerged in water. In South Arcot District (another part of our Diocese) some 80,000 acres were completely inundated. In Thanjavur, known as the rice bowl of South India, 1,20,000 acres were clean washed. Do these facts and figures mean anything to you? Do they challenge you?

God's call to its Church through the crisis

I would plead with all our readers to be patient with this reporting. It may be long but I would like it to be descriptive and factual. It has been a challenging experience but one could only thank God for such challenges through which He uses His Church to minister to the

World. One could see God moving in mysterious ways and one could realize that we are always held up by the sustaining hand of God and our faith enables us, enables the Church to respond to a crisis. This recent flood is God's call to His Church to respond to the needs of people.

(a) *Call to a Suffering Mission*

God calls the Church to suffer. The mission of the Church cannot preclude suffering. Perhaps today for the Diocese of Madras it is a mission of suffering. We are called to identify ourselves with the cross symbolised now in the floods. The Lord of the Calvary is suffering also now alongside our people in the flood-affected areas. God is calling us through suffering. This Christmas we will see the Cross in the Crib!

(b) *Call to a Militant Mission*

God sometimes calls us to be reflective missionaries, labouring with patience, quietness and love but now God is calling us to be 'militant missionaries'. Militant not in any destructive role but 'militated into mission', if I may say so, Militant in the sense of being-action-oriented. We can't be Jonahs sleeping in the lower deck of the ship, in which case we need to be thrown out. We need to enter into the situation with the sense of urgency and rush to aid the suffering community. Relief measures have been taken on in the Diocese of Madras with top priority and just now I write to you, feeling that God is calling us in the Diocese of Madras to be militant missionaries.

(c) *Call to an Ecumenical Mission*

A third call is never to be isolated. Jesus Christ Himself worked with a team. It was a team of workers who were not like-minded, who were never of the same mould and makeup. This is the time when mission needs to be interpreted in terms of inclusiveness. We function under the centrality of Jesus and His Cross but allowing other denominations, and even people of other faiths, our Hindu and Muslim friends too, to join with us in rehabilitating the suffering communities. In a recent Press Release, I pointed out that a low-lying area like Vyasarpady in the city of Madras which has been neglected for over fifty years, all non-governmental agencies should work with the Government to seriously think about raising the ground level of the area to protect the people against similar disasters in future. The Diocese of Madras and the World Vision alongside the Government and other agencies including the Hindu and Muslim organisations could work on a plan of raising the level of the entire Vyasarpady area. Teaming up should be inclusive, bringing together God's people irrespective of caste, community and creed. In this the Church (The Diocese of Madras) could well be the facilitating body.

Vision for Relief Mission

The Church moves from one challenge to another challenge, from one situation to another situation, from one area of need to another area of need. The pendulum swings from one end to the other, from famine relief to flood relief. In this country of contrasts the Vision for relief needs to be clear. The dream must become actualised. The Diocese of Madras will need to work with a plan that revolves around our reflections, our concerns motivating people into action. Mobilisation of all available resources should be part of our vision. Relief and development are part of the Gospel. Development is helping people to help themselves. It is enabling communities to build their communities. It is people building themselves for a better world. Our whole strategy from now on will be more than formulating a 'Project' a structured institution; it will be a people oriented movement. It is just not going from village to village, from place to place but organising people around live issues in a specific context, building people to build themselves. It is a movement from people to people.

Phase I

(a) Immediate Relief, Food and Clothing

First, we attend to relief and then move further into Development. We have rushed relief. On the very next day the Diocese of Madras was on the streets of Vyasarpady, visiting 8,000 families with food packets. The next few days with the limited resources on hand we provided relief to people in different pockets. We have covered almost all the villages badly hit and I am grateful for the prompt action taken by World Vision, CASA and other Relief Agencies. The Madras Christian Council for Social Service has done an excellent job along with us. I am happy to single out two organisations that have worked very closely with us, namely World Vision under the leadership of Mr. Saeed Rallia-Ram, the Executive Director and the Madras Christian Council for Social Service under the leadership of Mr. Benjamin Franklyn, the Executive Secretary.

We will have to adopt a method of developing a sense of independence. Our people should never be encouraged to get something for nothing. It will have to be from now on 'A Food for Work Programme'. It will have to be a 'Food for Struggle Programme', which will include organising the people to appropriate the benefits to which they are entitled, to tap the available resources in the community and the Government, and to build up their own strength for development and self-reliance.

I must share with you a fasting demonstration that I attended in the Madurantakam Taluk. Four hundred people from six villages were demonstrating and fasting. They were already people without food. They rightly claimed that the Government representatives visited the people and the villages when they needed their votes, but at the scene of disaster, destruction and death, the high placed Government Officers were visiting bridges and buildings but not people. I shared this with the press and they found it difficult to digest and would not like to report it in their papers. They however, reported that the Church felt disappointed with the Government aid not reaching the people in need.

(b) Shelter

Most of the people are without shelter. They are on the streets and on the pavements. In the rural areas

the families are living under tree shades, the twigs and the leaves are woven to provide temporary protection. They have no resources to build their houses. They have no jobs to earn their living. There was yet another scare of a cyclone but God in His mercy quelled the storm and we were protected from further disaster. We are deeply grateful to the Lord for this mercy. Some of our churches, parish halls and schools were kept open for shelter in the event of any such disaster.

(c) Immunisation

The staff in our Diocesan Hospitals have been put to work with immunisation against cholera and typhoid. Tablets to purify water are being used. We have not heard officially, of too many outbreaks of cholera and typhoid. There have been outbreaks of Jaundice in some areas. But we are deeply grateful to God for the abundance of His mercy in our feeble struggle.

Phase II

(a) Relief as a Spring-Board for Development

Using Relief as an entry point into the village and slum community, we are trying to programme for our greater involvement in the development of the people. The community does not mean just Christians but we understand the community as God's community. God's people irrespective of caste and creed. Again we need to see this as a God-given opportunity for the Church to extend itself into the world. The Church cannot be contained within the narrow walls of a building but the Church is the extension of the Incarnation with Christ the head and the Church the body, in the midst of people in the world.

(b) Rebuilding houses and homes

We have a big question mark on this issue. It has been known to us that houses rebuilt are not used for the purposes for which they were meant. However, in a few places we may have to go into this type of a programme. We may have to get people involved in this. But just the building of houses and a free provision of everything would make the concept of development rather warped. We need to build their homes too, their families and communities as well. We should come forward to provide a building to a certain level and leave it for the people to complete it so that they will feel involved. This will leave them not only with a greater sense of responsibility but also of participation-financial and otherwise. The housing will be a part of our second phase and it will have to be very contextualised, need-based and situation based.

Another aspect of Phase II will be to build integrated Community Centres with a large hall on a fairly elevated ground. These Community halls will provide for community programmes by day, adult education classes in the evening and for religious services and public functions. This could also operate as relief centres in emergencies. I think we will have to go into this type of building in a number of places.

Thirdly, we need to organise the people into workable groups to demand their rights from the Government. This would have to begin by creating an awareness among them. We should take up awareness building as a programme at this stage. We should use this flood situation as a lever for community development, for conscientising

the people and creating an awareness among them about their rights and resources. As a village boy I feel that awareness-building should be one of our top priorities. Our rural people are desperately in need of an awakening from their inaction I see this more and more as an important task of this Diocese, which should play the role of a catalyst in the development effort, making people conscious of their needs and helping to work out suitable strategies for meeting them.

We need to remember that our relief and development programme will cost us about Rs. 3,00,000 (a little less than \$ 30,000). Where will we find this money? We are not too anxious about it. Our people have begun to give generously and the Lord will provide.

Phase III

I think I have mentioned this earlier and I would like to repeat that we must voice our concerns to the Govern-

ment so that the Government machinery acts swiftly to help the people. The valleys must be lifted and the mountains brought low. Ecology should now attract our attention and serious study. We should see this as an opportune moment for the Church and other agencies to work with Government to undertake a study of our environment and its resources and to redesign our development programmes for the benefit of the people in the 21st century. There must be a task force for this purpose. Maybe God is calling the Church for ecumenical action, involving even non-christian agencies to work along with us. Our Christian witness would never get watered down, but it could be furthered by including people of other faiths and working together for the betterment of man, and in this situation remembering that for us this is the *Missio Dei*. We will make no compromise that we work under the Lordship and centrality of Jesus Christ and all our actions are an extension of His Love.

1985 Christmas Message from WCC General Secretary

DR. EMILIO CASTRO

The central committee of the World Council of Churches met last July in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. For many participants, the most moving experience was their encounter with those who, in that country, have for many years struggled for human rights, dignity and survival. A number of these victims of recent oppression came forward to express their gratitude to the World Council of Churches for the support it had given them during those difficult years.

For example, the courageous mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, those women whose children were kidnapped, taken away by the police or the army, never to be seen again, and who, year after year, have been demonstrating in front of government offices, asking that justice be done, wrote to the central committee to express their gratitude for the solidarity they had experienced in the fellowship of the WCC and its member churches in Argentina. We were all touched by the letter. It was a clear indication of what people expected of the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement: to mediate to men and women everywhere God's concern for the poor, the powerless, the oppressed, the marginalized and the sinned-against.

What is Christmas if it is not the celebration of God's solidarity with all humankind and with each one of us? As the apostle Paul said: 'You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; rich as he was, he made himself poor for your sake in order to make you rich by his poverty' (II Cor. 8:9). The Incarnation is the expression of the limitless love of God who came into the world to share our situation, assuming our sinful flesh and thus taking us with him through the cross and beyond to the resurrection.

This grace in action will be forever the model of Christian solidarity which does not consider the merits or demerits of those who receive it. The commanding motivation is

love. It is the solidarity of participation, taking risks with those to whom solidarity is expressed. It is also the definitive commitment to humankind that God in Christ made once for all.

The expression of our solidarity should incorporate this dimension of identification, in faithfulness to our Lord. Those with whom we want to be in solidarity should be assured of our unfailing support, our covenant commitment, our belonging with them in the love of God which binds us together.

But the Incarnation is for the salvation of humankind, the creation of a new human being. Our own identification with those who suffer should have as its goal this transformation of personal and communal life. The power of the resurrection reveals itself in the act of sharing and of our common struggle against the personal and structural expressions of human sin.

At this Christmas time, we ask your prayers for the people of South Africa. Their cry and the deep involvement of their churches in the struggle for basic human dignity demand total support. There are of course many other situations in the world where similar struggles of faith are taking place. We believe that the power of the resurrection is dramatically at work in all such situations, and that through suffering and patience they will be led to see the dawn of a new day.

The ecumenical family—including the churches in South Africa and other member churches of the WCC—has paid a heavy price for its solidarity with the people of South Africa, but this is a small price to pay when we think of God's promise of liberation and the reconciliation to come. May God grant all of us a blessed participation in the liberating ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—EPS.

[DECEMBER 1985]

ADVENT

REV. R. T. BHASKARAN, *Madras*

The word Advent is derived from a latin word. 'Adventus' which means coming or arrival. This season is a time of preparation for the festival of Nativity. In the 6th century, Councils held in Gaul declared this season a penitential period of six weeks before Christmas. A 7th century manuscript containing a complete table of lessons from the Pauline epistles, is an early witness to the Ambrosian liturgy of Milan. Eventually the Roman Church reduced the Advent Season from six to four weeks before Christmas. In the 9th century the first Sunday in Advent became the beginning of the Church Calendar year.

The meaning of Advent

The term was first understood as referring to the birth of Christ, and so the Advent Season was a time of preparation for Christmas. Since it commenced at different periods, e.g. at Milan with Sunday after St. Martin (November 11th) and in Rome with the 1st Sunday in December, this term, 'Adventus' was also taken in the wider sense of the coming of Christ in general—hence the lessons for Advent refer to the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment—and so it was also connected with the notion of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the Medieval Church the Advent season was a time of fasting and repentance. Hence one finds in it the figure of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ and the preacher of repentance. In the Roman Church, Advent has still the character of a penitential season. The Colour of the Vestments that are worn during this season is Violet, denoting repentance—new life. This character of earnest and serious devotion appears more

in the preaching, teaching and insistence upon attendance at Holy Eucharist. As the Protestant church adopted the medieval church calendar—the observance of the advent season and the advent lessons, had become the practice of the Protestants. Thus the season retained its double character—the preparation for the Christmas Festival and the contemplation of the different ways of the coming of Christ. It is not only commemoration of the birth of Christ as a historical event, it is also and, much more, the celebration of the coming of God in the flesh as a Saving event. The very celebration itself is a Saving Event that brings about the coming of Christ in men's souls.

The word 'coming' refers to the feast of Nativity. Further more the ancient 'introit' for the epiphany begins with the words 'Behold, the Lord the Ruler is Come'. Advent enables one to understand the meaning of 'incarnation' and all that the Incarnation accomplishes. The Gallian liturgy did not give emphasis upon the 'Second coming' which is a striking element of the present Advent liturgy. Christ has come once, He will come again—indeed Christ has never left the church and the world. He is continuously present in His Church. For this reason, Advent is now a celebration of His First Coming with His presence in the midst of His church and the church is looking forward to the full and final coming when He will complete the work of the Redemption. The word Advent must therefore be taken in the fullest sense,—past, present and future. Between the first coming and second coming of Christ, the present coming in Grace is constantly taking place. The act of His coming by Grace in men's hearts, the church not only prepares to welcome Christ at Christmas time or to greet Him in the hour of His final triumph, it rejoices even now, the continual presence of its 'Lord in its midst'.

MEDITATION I

Luke 21:25—33. Romans 13:11—14.

This passage is not concerned with our Lord's coming in Palestine but with the Second coming at the end of time. However, the Second Coming is fitting to the Adventus, in connection with the threefold dimension of the liturgy which is set in order for this season.

Past ; The events of Christ's life, prepared for in the Old Testament.

Present ; Applying to us now in the context of the present-day situation.

Future ; To reach complete fulfilment in us at the end of time.

The most significant aspect of this passage is Jesus' claim to be the son of Man, who would come as God's decisive intervention into human history'. The title 'son of Man' was used by the Jews, expecting God's promise to be fulfilled through a person of God—like Moses, whom they referred to by this name. The

expression is found in the Old Testament, in Daniel's chapter 7, (about 165 BC)—there Israel is reorganised as a community and not as an individual. Whereas this passage refers the title 'son of Man' to an individual, heavenly though in human form; who would be sent by God to rule and judge the world. People thought that He might be the Messiah—this idea varied from one circle to the other among the Jewish community. This term did express the consciousness of the coming of an unimaginable, majestic, total change in human history that would change human life and make it totally different—God himself coming fully into our broken world. It was the imminence of this event that Jesus tried to convey to His hearers. This declared that God was with us,—that God had become Man. 'The word became human being and full of grace and truth and lived among us'.

St. Paul brings out in this epistle that Christmas belonged to the day—the night of distance from God is now fading and Christmas belong to the day by His way of life. Darkness for the Jews meant imprisonment, disaster, evil, grief and death. After the coming of Christ the world was no

longer the kind of world the Christians lived in. St. Paul urges that Christians must 'put on' the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a challenge for Christians to reaffirm or rededicate our baptism. 'For as many of you were baptised into Christ have put on Christ' Galatian 3.27. St. Paul in

his letter to Romans (6th Chapter) reminds us of what implied in our baptism by being baptised into union with Christ Jesus, we are enabled to cease to be 'slaves of sin' and instead to 'set our feet upon the new path of life'.

MEDITATION 2

Matthew 11 : 2—10.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist is portrayed as the Prophet by Luke. He preached that God is coming to Judge and punish. He used the slogan 'Repentance'—one must make complete surrender to God's will, put confidence in His power and willingness to help the helpless. He accused the rulers of the day for their evil practices like any other prophets. He foretells the future. He met with rejection and death at the hands of the Political and Religious rulers.

Prophets are God's representatives and hence John the Baptist represented God in the context of his time. The concept of Jewish life is to be lived with, in relationship to God. The function of the prophet was to act for God in the midst of the people, giving them guidance in God's way for Salvation. At the time of John the Baptist, prophets had been ignored and were no longer necessary. The Scribes superseded the role of the prophets. The religious guidance was only meant for interpreting the law. The Scribes and pharisees were used as mouth-pieces of the establishment, not as people from God, to change the course of history. But the ordinary Jewish people were expecting a prophet to guide them in God's way and to liberate them from foreign oppression. Often they thought Elijah would lead them to new age by leading his people to a deep conversion in their lives, reconciling them with God. John the Baptist signified the last prophet of whom the Jewish people longed for, and all that their

race had looked forward to for so many centuries of time coming to them of God's rule.

A prophet had appeared to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. He dwelt in wilderness. His dress and his food habits were unusual. His life style most probably reminded of Moses the man who had prepared God's people for the Old Testament Salvation and Elijah was considered as the forerunner of the Messiah. He was calling people to join the society for the new age. John had become impatient while he was in prison. He sent his disciples to Christ to verify whether Christ was the Messiah or he should wait for some one to come. For an answer Jesus pointed to what was publicly known about Him—what the crowds had seen—the Miracles of healing which were the signs of the Messiah. He said 'go and tell John what you hear and see' Jesus answered and threw light on the two views of John and Jesus.

There was the threatening, fearsome view heralded by John and there was the kindly and healing one put into effect by Jesus. Jesus drew the attention of John to the passage of Isaiah 35 : 5-6 and 61 : 1-4. They are vivid in their character to point to Jesus—not as the angry judge but as one who healed their afflictions. Jesus tells the true character of John, that he was expected as the fore-runner of the Messiah. John was more than a prophet who could introduce God's coming to men in a real way. He prepared the hearts of the people to receive Jesus as the 'Lord of Lords' and 'King of Kings' and thus establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

MEDITATION 3

St. John 1 : 19—28.

Like the other three evangelists, John the disciple places John the Baptist at the forefront as heralding Good News. He stresses the greatness of Jesus Christ much more than the other gospel writers,—his main emphasis being that Christ existed before John the Baptist. He introduced John the Baptist as his whole mission to point towards one greater than himself to prepare for his imminent and triumphant coming. The Baptist was a mere voice of the word of God 'the full expression of His creative power—'. The main object of John was to prepare the way for Christ. John considered himself unworthy to perform the most menial office (the office of a slave) such as undoing the sandals of Jesus.

Christianity is an opportunity by which we can witness to the world the works of Christ. Christians must be

ever ready to do even any service to do good to others and to bring the glorious love of Christ. Each one must find his place in God's plan of Salvation as extension of Christ's presence in the world. In what way are we paving the way for Christ to come into the sphere of political, social, economic and religious order. The church must be aware of its position in the world. It is like a little salt of the earth and a light which is set on the mountain top. So that others may see the good works of every member of the Church and may receive and accept Jesus Christ and thus becoming children of God. The church has to play the role of John the disciple with all its sincerity and humility. Do we represent Christ in the Godless, demonic materialistic world. We shall be judged according to our deeds. The reason of Advent demands for total surrender, commitment and renewal in one's own discipleship and await the glorious coming of our Lord in the future.

Luke 3:1-6

It is a great revolutionary event of God's word coming to men and of man's response to it. It means a complete commitment to God in our vocation to fit into His saving plan. God uses us for the implementation of that plan—God's plan that enters into every corner of human life, fighting it up with love and truth. The Baptist's own vocation was to prepare for Christ's coming. He was enabled to do this by the word of God. In the Old Testament the word of God signified God's presence among men;—illuminating, demanding and powerful. By rejecting it, Saul had lost the Kingship. Prophets were used to bring God's plan to people. John the Baptist brought the word of God by demanding baptism of repentance, threatening those who would not listen, but of splendid promise for those who would obey. Isaiah had announced to the exiles at Babylon the triumphant coming of God to set them free. He had pictured this coming as that of a great king visiting his people. It was a joyful event, this coming of a rich and victorious king to bring wealth and security to his people. That was the kind of coming, John was announcing and it too was a joyful event. Thus God's joyful message is for all men, unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke includes from Isaiah's prophecy the part which announces that:

'The Glory of Yahweh shall be revealed and all flesh

shall see it together. That all flesh shall see the salvation of God by which he evidently means the Messiah—and His Kingdom.' There is no more sorrow or fear of death because Christ's coming into the world destroyed the sin, disease and the death. John was calling people into a new morality as the mark of true reality for repentance of Baptism.

The perspective of Advent shall be extended to the world community at large at the present age of nuclear threat, spread of dreadful and mysterious disease such as 'Aids' (Acquired immune-deficiency syndrome) which claims large number of lives within a short period, moral breakdown in unjust sick society, unequal wealth in modern economic order, power maniacs in political spheres and the alienation of the very nature of God's love in the religious circles. The coming of the Lord as the giver of peace and order of new life is very much expected at the close of the twentieth century. Advent demands a spirit of repentance in Political, Social, Economic and Religious world. The world has been split into several subcultures. Advent brings peace, goodwill, love among the people. This scope, object and the concept of God's deep and everlasting care for the world to be proclaimed in the pluralistic society for a fearless and harmonious age. May the Advent bring the 'broken world' into the creative power of God's hand. Therefore God's redemptive love would be the central force of the present world.

OUR RECENT PUBLICATIONS

RURAL IN-MIGRANTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION by A.S. Seetharamu, C.L.S.-C.I.S.R.S., 1985 ; pp. 64 ; Rs. 16.50

In this study of postgraduate students entering Bangalore University between 1978-80 the author a trained sociologist, shows that in spite of initial difficulties due to their background, which is generally poor, and their castes which are from the lower strata, such students soon overcome these difficulties to achieve considerable success both academically as well as in terms of leadership and interpersonal relations. It is indeed heartening to note that students from the so-called deprived sections of society can and do achieve such success in rehabilitation through education.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE KINGDOM by Harvey L. Perkins, 1985 ; pp. 64 ; Rs. 7.00

The Rev. Harvey Perkins is well known because of his long association with the Christian conference of Asia as Secretary for Development and Service. In this little booklet he presents four Bible Studies all centering on the Kingdom of God. He begins rightly with the Good News of the Kingdom, showing that Jesus presented in his vision a founding of a new community and a new way of life. The next study looks at the differing responses to this vision and offer, through the acceptance of forgiveness, and the exercise of Christian love. Such acceptance leads to the new spiritual power released with the help of the Holy Spirit, and leads to the founding of the early church. The early Church was therefore a witnessing church to this new power to be availed of through the acceptance of God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

OPPRESSED THE LIBERATION AND GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR by Abraham Malpan Memorial Lectures delivered by Andrew Kirk, 1985 ; pp. 40 ; Rs. 6.00

The three lectures presented here are inkeeping with the concept of a pilgrim church moving with the times and understanding afresh the meaning and practice of the Christian life and action in our momentous times. The foundation is laid in the first lecture which deals with the Biblical references to the Oppressed. The Good News that was brought to these people was that of Liberation, but this liberation was not only of the spirit from the power of sin but also for an abundance of life in this world. Therefore it was indeed Good News to the Poor—both the poor in Spirit as well as those oppressed with various human handicaps and ills, social economic and political.

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Mission in Christ's Way

By REV. M. AZARIAH, General Secretary

Introduction: The Theme chosen for the Twentieth Session of the Synod of the Church of South India that is meeting in Trivandrum from January 11-15, 1986, is the same that the *World Council of Churches' Commission and Evangelism* has planned for the *World Mission Consultation* in 1988. The Text of the Theme is: *Mission in Christ's Way. 'Thy will be done on earth as in heaven'.*

In preparation for the Synod 1986, Bible Studies and critical reflections on the above theme are being made in our Dioceses and this article is offered as a contribution to this process.

I. The Church's Mission in India on the eve of the Twentieth Century cannot be altogether different from the Mission in Christ's way as understood by His contemporaries in Palestine.

Writing about the close of the First Century, the author of the Fourth Gospel had left us on record a succinct and authentic summary of the Mission mandate of Jesus Christ. I am referring to the Scripture passage in John Ch. 20 vv19-26. There we find most thoughtfully articulated form of the Great Commission.

In my opinion, the passage of the Gospel of Math. 28 : 16-20 cannot be called the Great Commission since it is incomplete and not so comprehensive as the passage in John 20. According to John, the setting in which the disciples received the mandate for Mission is also the occasion of the coming of the Holy Spirit or the Pentecost. Such a setting is conspicuously absent in the Mathaian account as also in the Mark's Gospel. But writing much later than all the Synoptic Gospels, as well as the Acts of the Apostles, St. John would seem to correct both Mark and Matthew while accepting and accommodating the role of the Holy Spirit in Mission from Luke-Acts account.

While reference to the Holy Spirit in Matthew is found only in the Trinitarian formula for Baptism (Ch. 28 v. 19), for John the proper setting and context for the Mission mandate is the actual presence of Triune God, as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in and through the Risen Lord. That is why it is preferable to think of John 20 : 19-23 passage as containing, what I would call, the Greatest Commission.

II. Now let us to take a look at the salient features of this passage. On Easter Sunday, according to John, the Risen Lord appeared first to Mary Magdelene near the empty tomb. The second appearance was to the

ten disciples (without Judas Iscariot and Thomas) inside a room locked from within by the disciples for fear of the Jews. Unlike in the Mathaian account where the Commission given is on a mountain place which is difficult to identify, here in John, the location is quite clearly identified to be in a historical and earthly plane, in a really human context and not in an imaginary place or time.

Appearing suddenly in the midst of the disciples Jesus says: 'Peace be with you'. He repeats the same greeting in the course of this appearance. This at once brings Joy to the disciples thus banishing all fear. This is the first gift which the Risen Lord gives to His disciples, namely, the gift of Peace that brings joy or 'Shalom' which included every aspect of meaning understood in the era of the Old Covenant or in the Old Testament as could be seen by Jesus use of the same word on two other occasions in this Gospel namely Ch. 14 : 27 and 16 v. 33. Before proceeding to offer His second gift, the *Holy Spirit* which could emanate only after Jesus was raised to glory (Ch. 16 v. 39) the Risen Lord shows to His disciples the marks of His crucifixion, of the wounds in His side and His hands.

This is another way by which St. John would affirm the physical reality of the presence of Christ which must be acknowledged and proclaimed by the disciples also in the historical context of this earth.

After having shown His side and His hands, the Lord says to the disciples, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me so I send you'. From this flows the second gift of the Spirit that is breathed into the disciples. But it is inextricably linked to His sending them into the historical and earthly world. The Spirit breathing and the sending of the Holy Spirit and the Mission are in fact like the two sides of the same coin and together form one single gift. In other words, the gift of the Spirit is also the Gift of Mission. Gen. 2 : 7 uses the same Word on the role of the spirit in the creation and here in St. John there is a suggestion to relate the action of 'breathing' by Christ to the action for New creation which is the goal of Jesus' Mission so it is for the Mission of the Church, the creative power of the spirit is breathed into the first disciples the *nucleus church*.

Then the Lord proceeds to give the third gift which is the *gift of forgiveness*, both for receiving and giving out or sharing with others which indeed is the *gift of Reconciliation*. He says to the disciples, 'If you forgive people's sins they are forgiven, If you do not forgive them they are not forgiven'.

This authority to give and take forgiveness is given to disciples and all disciples and not only to the special ministers, the clergy or others who are also in need of forgiveness. It is, in fact, as I understand, the authority to bring about and participate in the gift of Reconciliation in the historical context of the world of people.

Thus, we can delineate three clearly defined gifts that are given to the disciples and therefore to the church to be received as gifts of Grace and to pass them on and transfer through the sacrificial style of the Cross-Event. And, it is with all these three gifts the Risen Christ proclaims the mandate for Mission saying 'As the Father sent Me, so I send you'.

This Johanine perspective on the Mission mandate at once clarifies to us what should be the mission in Christ's way for India today.

III. Until the dawn of the Modern Missionary era, beginning with the arrival of the German Lutheran pioneer Missionaries namely Zeigenbalg and Plutchau in the year 1706 in Tranquebar and the famous William Carey and his companions from Britain at the close of the same century in Calcutta, there was practically no authentic obedience to the Mandate for the Mission in Christ's Way in India.

But this is not to decry or deny the work of the great Francis Xavier and his other Roman Catholic missionaries who followed after his arrival in Goa on the West Coast about the year 1552 A.D. They had a great harvest of converts from among the coastal people between Goa and Cape Comorin and also engaged in an illegal mission with the higher caste groups of Hindu society through the Madurai Mission of the princely Robert di-Nobili. The same policy was carried on in other forms through the well-known man of letters and Tamil Scholar, Father Beschi and his successors. For are we to forget the tradition of the St. Thomas Christians that gives the date of 52 A.D. for the arrival of the Apostle to India on the South Western coast of Malabar. The apparent Protestant Prejudice of mine, is in fact, based on my reading of Indian Church History before the coming of the Tranquebar missionaries. It is an historical fact that the so called Thomas Christians of the present-day Kerala, for 500 years between 52 AD and 1552 AD until the Portuguese Jesuits landed on the Indian soil had never seemed to have taken the Light of the Gospel beyond the boundaries of their own high caste Syrian Community. Bishop Stephen Neil in his *History of the Christian Missions* had pointed out that Xavier learnt during his visit to Cranganore that there was already a Christian community numbering about one Hundred Thousand souls on the South Western coast all confined to the one and the same community. That was why it would appear, that Xavier chose to move among the lower caste groups, particularly, the fishermen community with the Good news of Salvation. These were also the target people for most his successor missionaries while there were masses of people unreached still lower down the social ladder than the fisherfolks. However, this was changed by de-Nobili and others going with the Gospel to the richer and upper caste groups which became the major concern of the Roman Catholic church until that policy was challenged by the Protestant presence two centuries later.

The statement that more authentic obedience to the Mandate for the Mission in Christ's Way come into India along with the Protestant missionaries must therefore be seen against the historical background noted above as well as in the light of the following insights into the ways of Jesus' mission.

IV. (i) The Saviour of the World (John 4:42) acknowledged as such, only by the downtrodden, untouchable Samaritans was, in fact, born in a manger in the midst of the half-naked under-nourished, poverty-stricken and frightened lot of illiterate rural rustics. The Good News to the Poor proclaimed by the Angel first came to the Shepherds. Most appropriately the Gospel came with the message, 'Fear not', 'Today your Saviour is born', 'Joy to the World' (cf. Luke 2). Jesus' mission to the poor begins precisely with a message that casts out fear and brings Joy into their lives. This is why, as a part of the setting for the Mission mandate in John's Gospel, we see the frightened disciples become filled with joy in their hearts by the sudden appearance of the Risen Lord who banishes fear from those hiding behind locked doors. This, obviously is the first or rather preliminary element or feature of the Mission in Christ's way. The movement of the Good News is that it flows down to the poor much like the Old Testament view that 'Justice must roll down like the waters' into the depths and lower levels of Society. The same was reflected in the Song of Mary (the Magnificat) (Luke 1:46-55). This is precisely what is being emphasised in the so-called Mission Manifesto or Nazareth Sermon by Jesus in Luke 4:18-21; as also in Jesus' response to the enquiry about His Mission by John the Baptist in Luke (Ch. 7:18-23). This again is what Jesus summed up as His Mission when He said, 'I have come that they (people) may have life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). All these together form the content of the gift of Peace or 'Shalom' which our Mission mandate includes in St. John's gospel. By the very nature of its content 'Shalom' becomes an universal gift for the whole world.

(ii) The historical Jesus of Nazareth is defined as being true to His name Jesus (Matt. 1:21); as the One who brings 'forgiveness of sins to His people' by becoming 'God with us' or 'Emmanuel' to them. He identifies with those who are branded as 'Sinners and Publicans' and becomes 'God with us' to them. During his earthly ministry of 3½ years, Jesus called for repentance (Mark 1:15). Jesus offered forgiveness of sins to those who repent and thus bringing about Reconciliation of the sinners with their God and with their fellow human beings. This is an universal gift of reconciliation that He brings to this world. However, by declaring, 'only those who are sick need the doctor', He deliberately chose to side with 'the sinners and the Publicans', with 'the oppressed and the downtrodden', with 'the lost' (Luke 15; Luke 19:1-10) 'the Least' (Matt. 25) and 'the Last' (Luke 14:15-24) among the poor and oppressed people of His contemporary society in Palestine.

In the Gospel of Mark it is made abundantly clear that Jesus spent most of His time with the lowest rung of the society, with the people who were called 'Ochlos' the people who were the least, the rural illiterate masses, as against the 'Laos' who were the elitist, richer, better-placed sections of the Jewish society. Thirty-six times St. Mark alludes to these 'Ochlos' or 'Multitudes' or 'Crowds' of people. Jesus was moved with great compassion as He identified

their social reality as being 'like sheep without a shepherd', leaderless and directionless in their lives. We even hear of these crowds following Jesus for days together as in Ch. 8 v. 2 when they were with Him for 3 full days. It is quite clear Jesus was not merely having 'an option to the poor'; Nor merely 'a bias towards the poor' but was literally and physically 'siding with the poor'. Nay more; indeed He went much more closer to identify with the least, the poorest of the poor to the extent that He would own them as His 'brothers and sisters' as blood relations. They were in complete union with Him and He with them. So He would say, 'I am the one who is hungry, or thirsty or naked or a stranger or sick or in prison' in His discourse about the Last Judgement (Matt. 25 : 31 : 46). Such is the nature of His gift of reconciliation that begins with His Incarnation in Bethlehem and consummates with His identification with the least people. Undoubtedly, *Mission in Christ's Way* must mean mission focus on the least people in any society. And this in our caste-graded, hierarchical society of India, can only mean those at the lowest rung of the Social ladder, namely, the so-called 'Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes.' At least the focus must fall on these *the least people*. It must narrow down upon the most oppressed and deprived people who happen to be the so called 'Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes' or 'Harijans and Girijans'. These people number over 200 millions out of 800 million total population in India today.

(iii) The Risen and Glorified Christ before His ascension demanded from His disciples that 'when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, *you shall receive power* and shall be witnesses for Me, beginning from Jerusalem into Judea, into Samaria and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1 : 8). Clearly Mission in CHRIST's way involves *empowerment of the people* by the Holy Spirit with whom the process of New Creation of this whole world goes on (cf. Rev. 21). That is why the disciples are asked to pray to the Father saying, 'your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. And this can happen only by the empowerment of the Spirit of God of heaven. It was in the power of the Spirit that Jesus of Nazareth

'went about doing good' through His ministries of Teaching, Preaching and Healing. So did His Apostles and other believers who joined them following the Pentecost event as recorded in the book of Acts of the Apostles. So we discover the same process of Mission in the power of the Holy Spirit moving on into the rest of the World through St. Paul, the greatest of Missionaries and the countless number of his successors around the world after him. It is thus an Universal Movement of the Spirit and it is a GLOBAL PROCESS of NEW CREATION which GOD the FATHER of us all had set in motion. In this Universal and global operation all the disciples in all the earth are to be CO-WORKERS with GOD (I Cor. 6) and *partners* together.

Conclusion

In this land of India in the 1980s the same Christian Spirit of God continues to empower a mere 25 million population which is like a drop in the bucket of 800 million population. Not many rich, not many wise, not many strong, yet these are empowered to carry on the work of this movement of the Spirit and also the process of new creation which is the goal of Mission in Christ's way. However, this tiny little flock of the Christian community in India is not all that the Lord of History has got for the task that is at once global and local. It is only this little lump of dough that is called also to be *the salt* and *the light* for the nation of India. But it is only a small part of His own Body on this whole earth that cannot but work in partnership with the rest of His Body the World over. The RISEN CHRIST, appears again to those who have 'the eyes to see'. Time and again He appears saying, 'Peace be unto you' 'Receive the HOLY SPIRIT' and 'forgive the sins of the people'. Do we have 'the ears to hear the voice of our saviour'? It is my earnest prayer and fervent hope that no Indian Christian should fail to hear the voice of the Risen Lord greeting and Commissioning as ALL from that same room behind the locked doors.

THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF INDIA

We need a person deeply committed to Bible Cause for the post of Distribution Officer at our Bombay Auxiliary.

The applicant should be graduate with 5 years experience involving Marketing/Sales/Public Relations/Distribution of Scriptures between 30 and 40 years of age, fluent in the regional language and in English. Those with Theological education and experience in publishing/distributing Christian literature and Postgraduates will be given preference. Pay Scale Rs. 800-30-1250-40-1650 plus other allowances. Eligible for return first class train fare by the shortest route plus 10% for attending interview.

For application form and other details apply to the General Secretary, Bible Society of India, 20, M. G. Road, Bangalore-560 001 with a self-addressed stamped (70 paise) long envelope before 15-12-85. The last date for receipt of application is 31-12-85.



Standing First Row L to R : Rev. K. J. Samuel, Rev. P. V. Joseph, Rev. Y. Sebastian, Rev. P. V. Chacko, Rev. T. H. Hezekiel and Rev. K. J. George.

Standing Second Row : Rev. K. C. George, Rev. W. V. Varghese, Rev. C. S. Thomas, Rev. P. V. Varghese, Rt. Rev. K. Michael John (Bishop), Rev. K. G. Daniel and Rev. M. M. Mathew.

ORDINATION OF HONORARY DEACONS

Six selected persons were ordained as Honorary DEACONS on 31st August 1985 in the Divine service held at C.S.I. Christ Cathedral Church, Melukavu. The Rt. Rev. K. Michael John, Bishop in East Kerala Diocese, conducted the Ordination Service. By profession, these six Deacons are teachers working in schools and college. They are M/s. P. V. Chacko, Y. Sebastian, K. J. Samuel,

P. V. Joseph, T. H. Hezekiel and K. J. George. The Very Rev. P. D. John, Rev. C. S. Thomas, Rev. C. I. Joseph and a host of other Reverends assisted the Bishop in the Ordination Service. The Rev. Abraham Vellamthadathil gave the ordination talk and the Lay Secretary Shri. C. C. Jacob read the letter of Titles from the Bishop. This historical event in the history of East Kerala Diocese was witnessed by a large gathering of believers.

REV. K. J. GEORGE
(Correspondent)

PRISIDENT ZAIL SINGH HAILS ROLE OF CHRISTIANS

President Zail Singh welcomed the visit of Pope John Paul II to India in February and said he had great appreciation for the role the Christian community had played in various fields in the country.

Opening the National Convention of Christians at Bandra here on November 3 the President said Christianity came to India even before it was preached in Rome. The Christian missionaries had since then contributed to India's growth and set up the best educational institutions.

'The best hospitals in the country too are run by them, to mitigate the sufferings of the poor and the sick', the President noted.

'The Pope is coming to India in February next year and I extend him a very warm welcome. I am sure every community in this land will honour him as the head of a State and a religion,' the President said.

Mr. Zail Singh said in India secularism was kept in the forefront of national thought and all religions were being treated with equal respect. Some nations did not give respect to any religion than theirs, 'but here we have great respect for all religions'.

The convention for the first time brings together on a single platform the organisations of different Christian denominations by forming an association called the Federation of Responsible Christian Endeavour, (FORCE) according to the organisers.

Welcoming the delegates of the convention, Mr. George Menezes, president of All India Christian Forum, said the main aim of organising the convention was to search for unity among all Christian denominations, cutting across political and ideological barriers.

'The convention is a mixture of confession and boasting. While Christians are proud of their record of contribution to the nation, they are aware of their shortcomings.'

'Christianity is safer in India than it is in many other countries, including South Africa and the Philippines. Our love for Christ does not prevent us from loving our nation,' he said. 'FORCE would be committed to non-violence, promotion of communal harmony and national integration,' Mr. Menezes added.

He urged the Christians to shed their 'minority complex', as Jesus Christ had 'given us the gift of freedom from fear'.

The Union Minister of State for Home affairs, Mr. P. A. Sangma said the contributions of Christian community to education had been significant and unique. The community had played a very positive role in the country's freedom struggle and been continuing its role in national building activities, he added.

Mr. Nani Palkivala eminent jurist, whose message was read out in absentia said, that the minority communities in India had, by their contributions, earned for themselves a special niche in the history.

Noted journalist Mr. M. V. Kamat, who spoke of 'Christians in the mainstream of national life', protested against the denigration of Christian men and women by the film industry as drunkards, ruffians and people of loose virtue. 'When it comes to crime and loose virtue, no "one" community needs lessons from anyone,' he added.

President Zail Singh released a book titled 'The Christian Community and the National Mainstream' written by Dr. Louis D'Silva. [SAR News]

DR. MARY VERGHESE WINS THE 1985 ROBERT PIERCE AWARD FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Dr. Mary Verghese is a remarkable lady who used her injury and handicap to be of use to mankind, specially bringing inspiration to others who have been disfigured and feel useless.

She was born in Vypeen, Kerala in 1925 and graduated from the Christian Medical College, Vellore in 1952. During her residency in 1954, she was injured in a bus accident which left her paralysed waist downward.

She asked Dr. Brand at that time, 'I was wondering on your lectures on rehabilitation, when you said that there was always something a person could do, no matter how badly they were injured or deformed. I have been thinking about it and if you can fix me up I am ready to go back to my job. I have even prayed that this gash on my face would be used by God to bring inspiration to others who have been disfigured.'

Dr. Mary Verghese's spine was operated and made rigid and a wheel chair secured for her. Since then she began performing operations on people whose limbs were deformed by leprosy.

Her efforts led to the creation of the rehabilitation institute at the Christian Medical College, Vellore in 1966. She drove herself to the limit of her endurance to help the handicapped and leprosy affected patients who flocked to her department. In spite of her own affliction and pain, being confined to bed constantly, undergoing operations

and suffering asthma attacks, she never gave up and the department grew from strength to strength, becoming a model for other similar departments in the country. In July 1976, she retired from active service and still continued to serve at the CMC inspiring courage and confidence in people coming in contact with her.

To recognise her dedicated and pioneer work in this field of rehabilitation she was honoured by World Vision International by the presentation of the 1985 Robert W. Pierce Award for outstanding Christian leadership. This award is named after the founder who said, 'Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.'

The President of World Vision International, Rev. Thomas Houston presented the award to Dr. Mary Verghese on 21st October 1985 at a simple function in Vellore by her bed side. Several important leaders from the Christian Medical College attended, besides, the Executive Director of the World Vision of India, Mr. Saeed Rallia-Ram and Bishop Anandarao Samuel.

The award is in the form of an inscribed plaque, a medallion and a cheque for US \$ 10,000 which, Dr. Verghese plans to use for the work of the Trust founded by her 'A Christian Mission to the Physically handicapped.'

Dr. Mary Verghese who received the Padmashri Award in 1972 is the first recipient of the Robert Pierce Award in India.

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1. DIRECTOR

Essential Qualifications & Experience :

- M.D./MS. or equivalent postgraduation from abroad recognised by Indian Medical Council.
- Minimum 15 years experience after postgraduation in a large reputed hospital.
- Excellent professional and career record, exceptional leadership qualities, commitment, dedication and proven administrative competence either as Head of the Department for a period of 10 years, or Head of the large Hospital for 5 years.
- Age : Below 50 years.
- Salary at a suitable stage in the scale of Rs. 2500-100-3000-125-4000. Total emoluments in the range of Rs. 5,500 to 7000 per month.

2. HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT :

- (i) Medicine : M.D./M.R.C.P.
- (ii) Obstetrics & Gynaecology : M.D./M.S./M.R.C.O.G.

Experience : 15 years after postgraduation in a large reputed hospital including 5 years as Head of the Department with teaching, research and administrative experience and leadership qualities with commitment and dedication.

Age : Below 50 years.

Salary : At the appropriate stage in the scale of Rs. 2000-100-3000-100-3500 with allowances (total emoluments in the range of Rs. 5000 to Rs. 6400 per month).

3. SENIOR SPECIALISTS : (Head of Department)

- (i) Pathology — M.D. with experience in Histopathology.
- (ii) Ophthalmology — M.S. Proficient in eye surgery.

Experience : Minimum 10 years experience after postgraduation with above qualities, at least 2 years as head of the department or No. 2 in the Unit, administrative experience, leadership qualities with dedication and commitment.

Salary : In the grade of Rs. 1500-60-1800EB-100-2000EB-100-2500 plus allowances (total emoluments in the range of Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 5,500 per month).

All the above posts carry allowances as under :

- (i) N.P.A. — 50% subject to a maximum of Rs. 1,000.
- (ii) D.A. — 70% subject to a maximum of Rs. 1,850.
- (iii) C.C.A. — 8% subject to a maximum of Rs. 75.

4. NURSING SUPERINTENDENT :

M.Sc., or B.Sc., in Nursing. Preferably post basic. Minimum 5 years experience in Nursing administration of which 2 years in the senior cadre of a fairly large general hospital (300-500 beds).

Salary : at the appropriate stage in the scale of Rs. 650-30-740EB-35-880EB-40-1000EB-50-1300 plus allowances. Total emoluments in the range of Rs. 1,700 to Rs. 2,750 per month.

5. GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT :

M.B.A. with 5 years experience or Postgraduate in any discipline with a degree or Diploma in Hospital Administration with 5 years experience/or Postgraduate in any Paramedical or Ancillary subject with 10 years experience. The candidate should have administrative organisational experience in a senior administrative post in large hospitals, with leadership qualities. Retired ex-servicemen under 55 years, preferably with hospital management experience can also apply.

The selected candidate will be placed in the appropriate stage in the pay scale of Rs. 1500-60-1800EB-100-2000 plus the usual allowances admissible under the hospital rules. The total emoluments at the minimum of the scale will be about Rs. 3,100 per month.

6. CHIEF ACCOUNTANT :

C.A./I.C.W.A. with minimum 3 years experience or M.Com. with 10 years experience as Head of the Accounts Department preferably in Hospital Accounts. Pay at the appropriate stage in the scale of Rs. 1100-1600. Total emoluments at the minimum of the scale will be Rs. 2600 per month.

OTHER PERKS :

Institutional accommodation for posts 1 to 5. Free medical care, provident fund and retirement benefit, leave travel concession, etc.

Applications should include detailed bio-data, recent photograph, note on major professional and administrative achievements with testimonials, present salary, salary expected, names of two references, and should reach the Director, St. Stephen's Hospital, Tis Hazari, Delhi-110054.

Madras Gets Ready for Taize World

Meeting of Youth

At the end of the International Year of the Youth (27th December 1985 to 1st January 1986), a worldwide youth meeting will be held at Madras under the theme 'a pilgrimage of trust on earth'. This is the first time in Asia that the ecumenical community of Taize, which assembles each year thousands of youth from all over the world, prepares such a meeting.

The meeting will start on the evening of Friday, December 27, 1985 and will close during the day of Wednesday, January 1, 1986. Young people from all over India and from other Asian countries are preparing to go, as well as youth from Australia, Africa, Europe, North and South America.

In the five-day meeting under the theme 'a pilgrimage of trust on earth', young people worldwide will exchange their experience of struggle and contemplation in their different situations.

From Friday evening to Tuesday morning, each day will centre around a generous common prayer in the morning and afternoon at Loyola College campus.

There, in the heart of the crowd, it would be good to have 'an hour in the desert', to pray silently, to meditate, to make an inner resolution, to discover in God an inner life that has neither beginning nor end.

For further information, please write to :

Taize-Worldwide Pilgrimage

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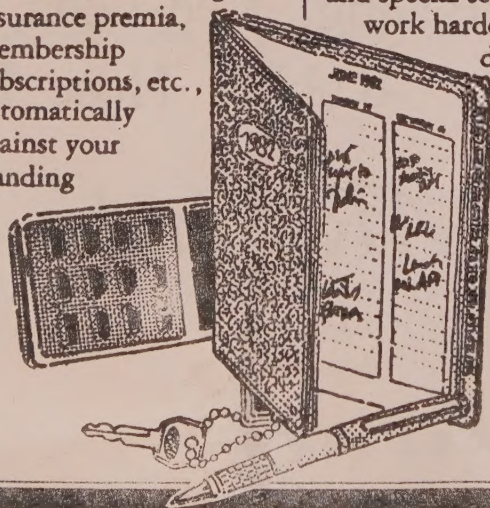
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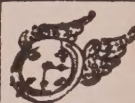
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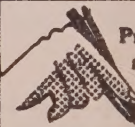
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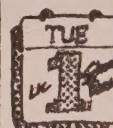
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